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American Samoa

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I. General

1. American Samoa,[1] a Territory administered by the United States of America, is located in the South Pacific approximately 3,700 kilometres south-west of Hawaii and 4,350 kilometres north-east of Australia. It consists of six islands (Tutuila, Aunuu, Ofu, Olosega, Tau and Rose) belonging to the Samoan group. Swains Island, 340 kilometres north of Tutuila, is administered as an integral part of American Samoa. The total land area of the Territory is 197 square kilometres, about 70 per cent of which is covered by dense forest. Lying near the equator, between latitudes 13 and 16 south, American Samoa has a typical tropical climate with a wet and a dry season. Pago Pago, the capital, is located on Tutuila, the largest of the islands, where 90 per cent of the population lives.

2. According to information provided by the administering Power, American Samoa's population is growing rapidly. The mid-year population estimate for 1995 was 56,350. The growth of approximately 21 per cent since the 1990 census, which showed a population of 46,773, places a strain on the public infrastructure and on the ability of the Government of American Samoa to provide necessary services. The current population density is estimated at approximately 234 persons per square kilometre, an average figure for the South Pacific. Over 88 per cent of the residents of the Territory are ethnically Samoan.[2]

3. Anyone born in American Samoa is a United States national and is entitled to a modified United States passport. The only substantial legal difference between a citizen and a national is that the latter, as a non-citizen, cannot vote in United States elections.

II. Constitutional and political developments

4. Information on constitutional and political developments in the Territory remained as reported in a previous working paper prepared by the Secretariat (A/AC.109/2023, paras. 4-9). Since January 1981, American Samoa has elected by direct vote a non-voting delegate to the United States House of Representatives. The current delegate, Mr. Eni F. H. Faleomavaega, was re-elected in November 1996.

III. Economic conditions

A. General

5. American Samoa suffers from the same economic constraints, such as geographical isolation and scarce resources, common to most island societies in the South Pacific. Its economy depends on the tuna fish canning industry. Prospects for agricultural development are limited owing to the small percentage of land suitable for cultivation. With respect to other industries, only tourism offers good potential for growth.

6. In 1993, the latest year for which official government figures are available, exports amounted to $488.2 million and imports totalled $427.5 million, resulting in a trade surplus of about $61 million. By far the largest trading partner of American Samoa is the United States (73 per cent), followed by Australia, Japan, New Zealand and Fiji. Imports are mainly food products, fuel and oil, machine parts, building materials, textiles and clothing; canned tuna accounts for 99 per cent of exports.[3]

7. According to information provided by the administering Power, the Economic Development Revolving Loan Fund programme was recently developed in the Territory as a primary alternative to meet inadequate capital financing that must be provided for new ventures in export-based industries. The purpose of the programme is to provide financing for existing and start-up businesses that have limited access to investment capital. It will also provide the leverage for capital deficient or marginal risk businesses to obtain loans from banking institutions. A total of $305,000 worth of loans (creating over 50 jobs) was disbursed for development of local businesses.

B. Public service

8. According to the *American Samoa Statistical Digest, 1994*, the Government of American Samoa continued to be one of the largest employers in the Territory, accounting for 4,355 persons, or approximately 27 per cent of the employed labour force. Most employees in the public service were American Samoans.

C. Public finance

9. In a statement to the people of American Samoa in April 1997, after his first 100 days in office, the Governor said that the cost-cutting measures introduced by the

territorial Government had stabilized its financial situation. While the situation had improved, he warned that the Government was still in a difficult situation. The Governor said that his Administration was making a conscientious effort to pay debtors and had so far paid $4 million in overdue bills to local and overseas businessmen.[4]

D. Land tenure and agriculture

10. Basic information on land tenure and agriculture is contained in a previous working paper prepared by the Secretariat (A/AC.109/2023, paras. 13-15).

E. Industry

11. Information on American Samoa's tuna-processing industry is contained in a previous working paper prepared by the Secretariat (A/AC.109/2023, paras. 16-18).

12. Other industrial activities in American Samoa are mostly service-oriented. There are a number of small factories processing soap, perfume and alcohol. In 1993, there were 2,204 registered businesses in the Territory, of which retail trade accounted for 34 per cent, wholesale trade for 14 per cent, service establishments for 24 per cent and transportation for 17 per cent.

F. Transport and communications

13. There are approximately 150 kilometres of paved roads and 200 kilometres of secondary roads in American Samoa. In 1993, there were 5,126 registered vehicles, of which 89 per cent were privately owned. There is a non-scheduled bus service.

14. Information on sea links and shipping companies is contained in previous working papers prepared by the Secretariat (A/AC.109/2023, paras. 22 and 23; and A/AC.109/2044/Add.1, paras. 41-44).

15. In 1993, a total of 852 vessels entered American Samoa, including fishing boats, freighters, yachts and cruise ships.

16. Pago Pago International Airport is regularly served by a number of airlines which link American Samoa with Hawaii and the United States mainland, as well as with Australia, New Zealand and other countries in the South Pacific. In 1993, the number of passenger arrivals declined by 6 per cent in comparison with 1992, while air traffic in general declined by 46 per cent.

17. American Samoa, through the overseas Communications Satellite corporate link, has direct dialling to most countries. In 1993, the Territory had 8,900 telephones, as well as 18 telex and 350 facsimile subscribers.[5]

18. There are several weekly newspapers in the Territory in both the English and the Samoan languages. There is also a daily newspaper, the *Samoa News*.

G. Water system and utilities

19. Information on the water system and utilities is contained in the previous working paper prepared by the Secretariat (A/AC.109/2044/Add.1, paras. 29-35). According to information provided by the administering Power, significant progress was being made with the Tafuna Plains sewer collection system (phase III), with about 750 residents connected to the system. The Department of the Interior has assisted in funding a Hazard Mitigation Project to improve the sewage ocean outfalls. The project is currently under construction. Other capital Improvement Projects funded by the Department of the Interior include a new sewer collection system for the island of Aunuu and a sewer connection programme within the Pago Pago area. The latter programme has successfully connected approximately 720 homes, and another 50 homes are expected to be served when the project is completed.

H. Tourism

20. Despite the Government's efforts to encourage tourism, the industry remains relatively small. According to information provided by the administering Power, total tourist arrivals totalled 5,800 in 1995, a decline of about 1,500 from the 1992 figure and about half the visitor level in 1991.

I. Financial institutions

21. Information on financial institutions in American Samoa is contained in the previous working paper prepared by the Secretariat (A/AC.109/2044, paras. 16 and 17).

IV. Social conditions

A. Labour

22. Information on the labour force in the Territory is contained in previous working papers prepared by the Secretariat (A/AC.109/2023, paras. 30 and 31; and A/AC.109/2044, para. 20). The labour force in the Territory, which has been steadily increasing since 1980, numbered 16,261 workers in 1993. The two largest employers are the Government and the two tuna canneries, which together provide approximately 62 per cent of the jobs. In 1993, the unemployment rate was 16.7 per cent.[6] In October 1996, the minimum hourly wage for workers in American Samoa was increased by 8 cents, to $2.45. This minimum pay level is nearly five times higher than in Western Samoa. The increase makes it one of the highest minimum wages in the South Pacific and attracts migrants from Western Samoa, Tonga and Fiji, as well as from Asian countries.[7]

B. Immigration

23. Information on immigration is contained in a previous working paper prepared by the Secretariat (A/AC.109/2023, paras. 32 and 33). Early in 1997, American Samoa's Governor announced an amnesty for illegal immigrants who arrived in the Territory before 1 January 1997 if they applied for permanent resident status. The amnesty expired on 3 April 1997, at which time only 600 illegal immigrants had taken advantage of the amnesty. It is believed that the number of illegal immigrants in American Samoa is between 1,000 and 5,000, which, according to the Territory's officials, is placing an increasing burden on the Territory's health, education and other services, which are free for all.[8]

C. Public health

24. The main hospital in the Territory, the Lyndon Baines Johnson Tropical Medical Center, has 140 beds and a staff of 25 physicians. Medical, dental and pharmaceutical services are available 24 hours a day at minimal cost to residents and visitors. For serious cases, off-island treatment, including hospitalization in Guam, Hawaii or the United States mainland, is provided free of charge.

25. In 1993, out-patient visits to the Center totalled 138,074, a decline of about 4.4 per cent from the 1992 figure. The emergency room continued to receive the most visits (41 per cent), followed by the dental and paediatric clinics. There were 4,833 discharges with 16,468 patient days in 1993. The occupancy rate for 1993 was 38.7 per cent, compared with 38.2 per cent in 1992. The average length of stay at the Center stood at 3.4 days.[9]

26. In early December 1996, public health officials of the Territory expressed concern that supplies of insulin and other critical medicines such as antibiotics and anaesthetics were negatively affected as a result of the territorial Government's problems with cash flow . The shortage of medical supplies has been so acute that the Center has had to borrow from the National Hospital in neighbouring Western Samoa. According to a statement by the Center's Associate Administrator, the Territory's Government was negotiating with the United States Department of the Interior to find a solution to the problem.[10]

27. According to information provided by the administering Power, despite problems between the present administration and the *Fono* (American Samoa legislature), the American Samoa Hospital Authority has made significant progress in improving the health situation on the island. Most projects are being funded with $1.2 million of federal Capital Improvement Project funds that have accumulated over the past several years. Among the major projects are upgrading of the labour/delivery area and the operating room, the provis n of a new X-ray machine in the expanded radiology section, the opening of a new emergency room in August 1996, new energy-efficient lighting and other projects.

28. In February 1997, health authorities in American Samoa warned that the highly contagious disease commonly known as "red eye" was reaching epidemic proportions in the Territory, with almost 20 cases of haemorrhagic conjunctivitis being treated at the local hospital daily. In February 1997, "red eye" spread rapidly across the Pacific, with hundreds of cases reported in French Polynesia, Niue, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Western Samoa.[11]

D. Crime and crime prevention

29. In 1993, a total of 2,417 offences were reported to the police, an increase of 14 per cent compared with 1992. The most common offences were disorderly conduct, assault, burglary, larceny, drunken driving and property damage.[12]

30. In February 1997, a new anti-drug bill was introduced in American Samoa, providing for tougher penalties for drug-related crimes.

E. Housing

31. In 1993, a total of 481 land use permits were issued. There were 338 permits for new structures, repair or alterations, with a total estimated construction value of $12 million.[13]

V. Educational conditions

32. The educational system in American Samoa is broadly based on the United States pattern of eight years' attendance of elementary school and four years' enrolment in high school. In 1993, there were a total of 99 private and public educational institutions, with a total enrolment of 16,503 students. About 44 per cent of the students were born outside American Samoa. The majority of foreign-born students were from Western Samoa and the United States.[14]

33. American Samoa Community College, established in 1970, offers two-year degree courses in arts and sciences and certificates of proficiency programmes in vocational skills, business, clerical and nursing curricula. At the end of 1993, the College had 1,277 students.[14]

VI. Participation in international organizations and arrangements

34. Information on American Samoa's participation in international organizations and arrangements is contained in a previous working paper prepared by the Secretariat (A/AC.109/2023, paras. 40-43).

VII. Future status of the Territory

35. In a statement made in 1993, the Lieutenant-Governor of American Samoa indicated that American Samoa preferred to remain a Territory of the United States (see A/AC.109/1159, paras. 25-31). This position remains unchanged as of today.

36. In his statement to the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) on 9 October 1996, the representative of the United States said that it could not automatically be assumed that the goal of eradicating colonialism was relevant to most or all of the Territories that remained on the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories. The United States had found from its experience as an administering Power that the people of the majority of those Territories understood that independence was not the only possible outcome of self-determination. He also said that they understood that their choices were not circumscribed by the three options set out in General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) of 14 December 1960.[15]

37. On 27 March 1997, the General Assembly adopted without a vote resolution 51/224 B, a consolidated resolution on 10 Non-Self-Governing Territories, section I of which is specifically devoted to American Samoa. In explanation of its vote on the resolution, the representative of the United States said that for the first time the resolution was appropriately balanced, shunning cold-war-style rhetoric and acknowledging international progress towards self-government in the Territories concerned. He also said that the resolution recognized that self-determination as it had evolved was not a unitary concept satisfied only by full independence, but encompassed a much broader range of acceptable options, as long as they were freely chosen through informed elections by the people affected.[16]

Notes

[1] The information contained in the present working paper was derived from a report transmitted to the Secretary-General by the United States of America under Article 73 *e* of the Charter of the United Nations on 1 April 1997 and from published sources.

[2] *American Samoa Statistical Digest, 1994*, p. 15.

[3] Ibid., p, 186.

[4] *Radio Australia News Summary*, South Pacific, 17 April 1997.

[5] *American Samoa Statistical Digest, 1994*, p. 159.

[6] Ibid., pp. 132 and 133.

[7] *Radio Australia News Summary*, South Pacific, 14 October 1996.

[8] Ibid., 1 and 2 April 1997.

[9] *American Samoa Statistical Digest, 1994*, p. 42.

[10] *Radio Australia News Summary*, South Pacific, 5 December 1996.

[11] Ibid., 7 February 1997.

[12] *American Samoa Statistical Digest, 1994*, p. 72.

[13] Ibid., p. 88.

[14] Ibid., p. 58.

[15] A/C.4/51/SR.4, para. 48.

[16] A/51/PV.94.